

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-09

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FM AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 6748

INFO AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD

AMCONSUL BOMBAY

AMCONSUL CALCUTTA

AMCONSUL MADRAS

CINCPAC

USIA WASHDC

UNCLAS NEW DELHI 1787

CINCPAC FOR POLAD

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PFOR IN US PK

SUBJECT: INDIAN PRESS COVERAGE OF BHUTTO'S VISIT -
US ARMS TO PAKISTAN

REF: MEDIA REACTION REPORT NO. 592

NOTE: WE ARE REPEATING REFTEL TO INSURE CONTENT HAS MAXIMUM
AND TIMELY DISTRIBUTION. PLEASE ADVISE IF MEDIA REACTION
REPORTS DO ROUTINELY ENJOY SAME DISTRIBUTION AS EMBASSY
REPORTING TELEGRAMS.

BEGIN SUMMARY: THE INDIAN MEDIA TODAY FEB. 6 CONTINUED TO
CONCENTRATE ON PAKISTAN PRIME MINISTER BHUTTO'S VISIT TO
WASHINGTON. MOST COMMENTATORS WARNED THE U.S. THAT THE
RESUMPTION OF ARMS SUPPLY TO PAKISTAN WOULD CAUSE A SET-BACK
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TO INDO-AMERICAN RELATIONS. THERE WAS LIMITED

EDITORIAL COVERAGE ON THE U.S. BUDGET. END SUMMARY.

ARMS TO PAKISTAN: MR. BHUTTO'S DISCUSSION WITH PRESIDENT FORD RECEIVED EXTENSIVE AND PROMINENT COVERAGE ON PAGE ONE. MANY MAJOR PAPERS APPEARING ON THURSDAY MORNING LED FRONT PAGES WITH THE BHUTTO-FORD MEETING, HIGHLIGHTING THE PRESIDENT'S "ASSURANCE" THAT HE WILL "ACTIVELY CONSIDER" PAKISTAN REQUEST TO LIFT US ARMS EMBARGO. STATE-RUN ALL INDIA RADIO CARRIED BOTH RADIO AND TELEVISION NEWS ACCOUNTS OF THE MEETING. MOST HEADLINES ANTICIPATED US ACTIONS. "DECISION TO GIVE ARMS TO PINDI REPORTED TAKEN" (INDIAN EXPRESS) AND "US ALL SET TO LIFT BAN ON ARMS FOR PAKISTAN" (PATRIOT).

MOSTLY BASED ON THE PRESS TRUST OF INDIA WIRES, THE NEWS ACCOUNTS STRESSED THAT "MR. FORD'S ASSURANCE COMES AMIDST REPORTS THAT A FORMAL DECISION WOULD BE ANNOUNCED SOON", ADDING "THERE WAS NO INDICATION WHEN THE EMBARGO WILL BE TERMINATED." THEY ALSO SAID WHITE HOUSE SOURCES MAINTAINED THAT THE US WOULD CONTINUE TO ENCOURAGE THE PROCESS OF RECONCILIATION IN SOUTH ASIA. THE NEWS AGENCY ALSO CARRIED A BRIEF ACCOUNT OF THE THREAT OF THE ALL INDIA PORT AND DOCK WORKERS FEDERATION TO "BOYCOTT" SHIPS AND SHIPPING LINES CARRYING ARMS, AMMUNITIONS AND MILITARY HARDWARE TO PAKISTAN FROM THE UNITED STATES. THE FEDERATION PRESIDENT S.R. KULKARNI HOPED THAT THE US GOVERNMENT WOULD NOT LIFT ITS ARMS EMBARGO TO PAKISTAN. THE ITEMS QUOTED KULKARNI AS SAYING HE VIEWED WITH "GRAVE CONCERN" THE ANTI-INDIAN PROPAGANDA UNLEASHED BY MR. BHUTTO AND HIS "UNWARRANTED" INTERFERENCE IN THE INTERNAL AFFAIRS OF INDIA.

THE NEWSPAPERS GENERALLY FRONTPAGED AMBASSADOR KAUL'S VIEWS CONVEYED TO THE SECRETARY OF STATE DR. KISSINGER THAT ANY CHANGE IN THE US POLICY ON ARMS EMBARGO WILL NOT ONLY AFFECT THE INDO-AMERICAN RELATIONS "ADVERSELY" BUT RETARD THE PROCESS OF NORMALIZATION IN THE SUB-CONTINENT UNDER THE SIMLA AGREEMENT.

SOME PAPERS CARRIED BRIEF WIRE SERVICE ACCOUNTS OF PRIME MINISTER GANDHI'S WARNING GIVEN IN BANSWARA, RAJASTHAN, THAT STOCKING OF ARMS CREATED A DANGER TO PEACE. THE PRIME MINISTER RECALLED THAT DESPITE REPEATED PLEAS BY INDIA THE

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UNITED STATES HAD ARMED PAKISTAN. INDIA WAS TOLD THAT THESE ARMS WOULD NOT BE USED AGAINST IT. WHAT HAPPENED AFTERWARDS WAS KNOWN TO EVERYONE, THE ACCOUNTS ADDED.

EDITORIAL REACTION WAS CRITICAL. THE CONGRESS PARTY-ORIENTED NATIONAL HERALD IN ITS LENGTHY LEAD EDITORIAL MAINTAINED THAT MR. BHUTTO IS "REVIVING THE COLD WAR" AND "TRYING TO CREATE A POLITICAL CLIMATE IN THE SUB-CONTINENT WHICH BOTH

SUPER POWERS MIGHT NOT RELISH." ALLEGING THAT PAKISTAN'S PREMIER ""LACKS VISION" AND HAS "A FERTILE IMAGINATION," THE PAPER HELD: "IT IS FOR WASHINGTON TO CORRECT MR. BHUTTO AND IMPRESSUPON HIM THAT MORE ARMS FOR PAKISTAN WILL MEAN ONLY MORE PROBLEMS FOR HER." THE EDITORIAL CONTINUED: "THE MAIN QUESTIONS WHICH WASHINGTON SHOULD ASK ITSELF ARE: WILL AN ARMS RACE IN THE SUBCONTINENT HELP PAKISTAN, INDIA OR EVEN WASHINGTON?; IS IT GOOD FOR WASHINGTON TO SPOIL INDO-US RELATIONS WHICH HAVE IMPROVED AFTER THEIR DETERIORATION IN 1971? BY MAKING A DISTINCTION BETWEEN LETHAL WEAPONS AND NON-LETHAL WEAPONS, SHOULD THE US ADMINISTRATION TRY TO GIVE ARMS TO PAKISTAN CLANDESTINELY?" THE TELUGU-LANGUAGE INDEPENDENT DAILY ANDHRA JYOTHI COMMENTED: "THE AMERICAN OFFICIALS WOULD DO WELL TO REALIZE THE DANGERS IMPLICIT IN ARMS SUPPLY TO PAKISTAN...IN THE PAST THIS HAS LED TO DETERIORATION IN INDO-US RELATIONS. THE CURRENT EFFORTS TO IMPROVE THESE RELATIONS WILL AGAIN SUFFER A SETBACK IF WASHINGTON DECIDES TO LIFT THE EMBARGO. THE SOONER THE AMERICAN OFFICIALS REALIZE THIS DANGER THE BETTER." ALL INDIA RADIO CARRIED A COMMENTARY BY K. RANGASWAMY EDITOR, FOREIGN NEWS AND FEATURES, IN WHICH HE RAISED THE QUESTION: "WHY DID THE US IMPOSE THE BAN?" HIS ANSWER: "OBVIOUSLY IT WAS A CASE OF GUILTY CONSCIENCE...ANY WEAPONS THAT THE US MAY GIVE PAKISTAN ARE DEFINITELY INTENDED FOR USE AGAINST INDIA AND NO OTHER COUNTRY. SHOULD A GREAT DEMOCRACY LIKE THE UNITED STATES BE A PARTY TO SUCH AN ATTACK AGAINST ANOTHER BIG DEMOCRACY LIKE INDIA?" HE ADDED: "THERE IS SO MUCH TALK ABOUT THE LIFTING OF THE BAN ON ARMS SUPPLY TO PAKISTAN. ONE MAY WELL ASK, WAS ANY EFFECTIVE BAN IN OPERATION AT ANY TIME?" A WASHINGTON DATELINED REPORT BY OWN CORRESPONDENT EASWAR SAGAR IN THE HINDU ASSERTED: "IT APPEARS THAT THE US DOES NOT INTEND ANY LONGER TO IGNORE PAKISTAN'S

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REPEATED REQUEST FOR ARMS. THE US, IT IS BELIEVED, WILL GIVE SOME QUANTITIES OF ARMS, PLEADING THAT THE LIMITED NATURE OF THE ARMS EMBARGO RELAXATION, WILL NOT ALTER THE BALANCE OR FUEL AN ARMS RACE."

REPORTING FROM WASHINGTON ANOTHER CORRESPONDENT, T.V. PARASURAM DECLARED IN THE INDIAN EXPRESS: "THE INDIAN AMBASSADOR MR. KAUL ...HAS FAILED TO GET ANY CONCRETE ASSURANCES ON AMERICAN INTENTIONS ON THE ISSUE OF ARMS FOR PAKISTAN." ACCORDING TO PARASURAM "THE DIALOGUE BETWEEN THE TWO COUNTRIES HAS BEEN BROUGHT UNDER A CLOUD." IF THE DIALOGUE HAD BEEN "ADEQUATE," HE REASONED, "IT SHOULD HAVE BEEN EASY FOR AN INDIAN AMBASSADOR NOT ONLY TO MEET THE SECRETARY OF STATE BUT ALSO TO GET THE FULL ANSWERS."SCHNEIDER

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